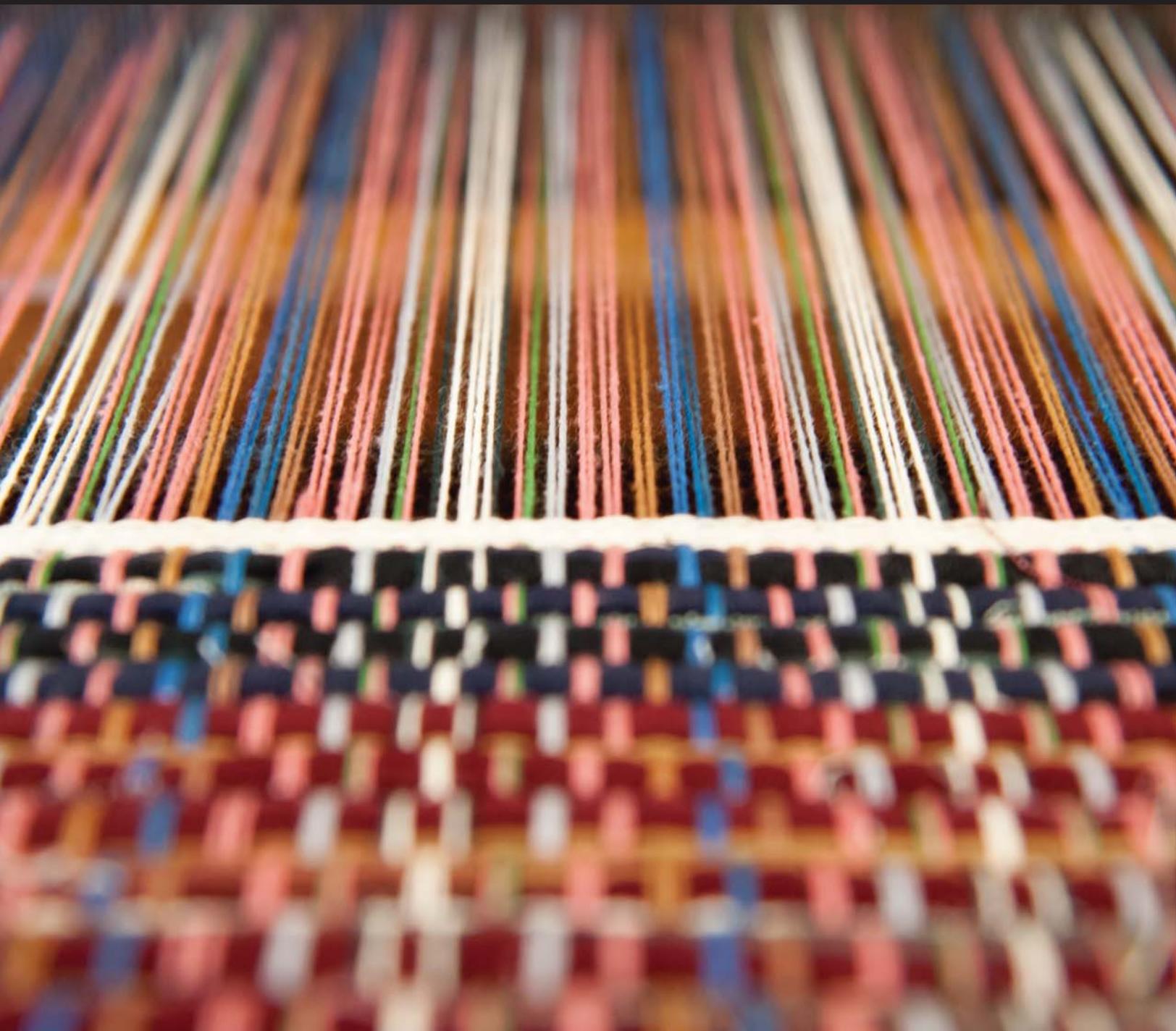


Weaving the Community Resilience and New Economy Movement

Voices and Reflections from the Field



post carbon institute

About this report

This report had its genesis in deep conversations within the [Thriving Resilient Communities Collaboratory](#) (TRCC) network, and the shared desire for better understanding the TRCC's purpose, actors, efforts, and visions. Conversations with TRCC colleagues (particularly founder Leslie Meehan) and members of the [Threshold Foundation](#) helped refine this project in three ways:

1. Gathering information and weaving together different strands of community resilience efforts, using an approach based on interviews and group conversations that had been prototyped by the TRCC and [Conversation Collaborative](#).
2. Deliberately engaging with leaders in the New Economy space, identifying areas of possible overlap with community resilience efforts.
3. Reaching out to the [New Economy Coalition](#) (NEC). This led to NEC offering this project a session at their June 2014 CommonBound conference, as well as their active participation in the research and outreach process. (Post Carbon Institute is a member of both the TRCC and NEC.)

Readers will note that this report focuses on what is unfolding in the United States, with some reference to Canada and other countries. This is because of our scope of knowledge and connections, not because efforts in the U.S. are inherently more interesting or advanced. Similarly, there are many other organizations and individuals within the U.S. doing vitally important work to build a new economy and resilient communities who we were regretfully unable to interview within the scope of this project. We look forward to learning and sharing with these and other colleagues.

Many thanks to these leaders in the Community Resilience and New Economy movement who generously shared their time and insights:

- Noel Ortega, [Institute for Policy Studies](#), [New Economy Working Group](#)
- Michael Toye, [Canadian Community Economic Development Network](#)
- Mira Luna, [Shareable](#)
- Joe Grafton, [American Independent Business Alliance](#)
- Chuck Collins, [Jamaica Plain New Economy Transition](#)
- Kelley Rajala, [Share Exchange](#), [North Bay Made](#), & [The Livability Project](#)
- Sarah Baird, [Center for a New American Dream](#)
- Carlyne Stayton, [Transition US](#)
- Mateo Nube, [Movement Generation](#)
- Laura Musikanski, [The Happiness Alliance](#)
- John Duda, [The Democracy Collaborative](#)
- Eleni Sotos, [Sustainability Funders](#)
- Rick Theis, [The Leadership Institute for Ecology and the Economy](#)
- Marcie Smith, [Responsible Endowments Coalition](#)
- Jon Scott, Singing Field Foundation & [Clean Water Action](#)
- Jackson Koepell, [Soulardarity](#) & [Grand Aspirations](#)
- Aaron Tanaka, [Boston Impact Initiative](#) & [Center for Economic Democracy](#)
- Sandy Wiggins, [Business Alliance for Local Living Economies](#) (BALLE), [RSF Social Finance](#) & [Consilience, LLC](#)

This report was co-authored by Marissa Mommaerts and Ken White, [Post Carbon Institute](#), and Ben Roberts, [Conversation Collaborative](#). Many thanks to the Threshold Foundation for providing funding for this project.

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1 Introduction

A movement is emerging in many places, under many guises: New Economy (or Economies), Regenerative Economy, Solidarity Economy, Next Economy, Caring Economy, Sharing Economy, Thriving Resilience, Community Resilience, Community Economics, Oppositional Economy, High Road Economy, and other names. It's a movement to replace the default economy of excess, control, and exploitation with a new economy based on respecting biophysical constraints, preferring decentralization, and supporting mutuality. This movement is a sign of the growing recognition that what often are seen as separate movements—environment, social justice, labor, democracy, indigenous rights—are all deeply interconnected, particularly in the way that the current economic system is a root cause of much that they seek to change.

Post Carbon Institute is an active participant in several networks that support these emerging concepts:

- building **Community Resilience** for a future of growing ecological, economic, energy, and social instability, and
- bringing forth a **New Economy** that provides alternatives to the current exploitative, consumption-driven economy.

Over time, we've recognized many overlaps and similarities between these networks, as well as other efforts with similar intents that could be ripe for engagement with some parts of the emerging movement. We set out to learn more about the visions and intentions of network leaders, and through dialogue and engagement help “weave the movement” more closely together by identifying synergies and making connections between leaders.

We interviewed eighteen leaders (see list in About this Report, above) and held group conversations with dozens more leaders by phone and via an in-person workshop at the New Economy Coalition's CommonBound conference in June 2014. Our interviews had an “appreciative” focus (an approach taken from the Appreciate Inquiry model of analysis); they gave participants the opportunity to step back and reflect on what is and has been “most alive” in their work, to dream about what “wild success” might look like five years from now, and to imagine the next steps we might collectively take to achieve that success. Many of them reported that this was an experience they valued—one that was not generally afforded during the day-to-day flow of their work.

What emerged was a portrait of a rich and vibrant movement, full of promise and hope for a better future—and still very much in formation—with many opportunities for creative engagement, collaborative movement-building, visioning, and developing strategy. Its many strands are not always spoken of as if they were part of a single whole, but the underlying coherence and interconnectedness of its various framings—both the main ideas of a New Economy and of Community Resilience, as well as all the other approaches and principles that run through them (such as localization)—suggests a nascent movement. We will often refer to it in this report as the “Community Resilience & New Economy (CRNE) movement.” At other times, we use one term or the other. Our interviewees tended to use primarily “New Economy.”

The shared image of this movement goes beyond both the fierce individualism of capitalism and the centralized control of state socialism; it is something much more diverse, creative, responsive, democratic, and dynamic. Indeed, the leaders we interviewed reminded us that the scale of the necessary economic transformation also requires a cultural shift in values: away from a focus on material wealth, and toward building vibrant, healthy communities and ecosystems.

We hope this process, report, and subsequent conversations help connect the movement to more of itself. We hope you are inspired to connect, collaborate, and build a regenerative, equitable, and resilient future...for all.

[W]hat does it mean, practically, to have a resilient system that generates freedom instead of fear, and abundance instead of scarcity? We must dive into these details and not fear the pragmatic, rife as it is with the mortal limitations of time and information, the frustrations of feeling as though we're often between the Devil and the deep blue sea.

At the micro-level, the experience of my own life has revealed how fundamental, paradigmatic, and revolutionary the notions embedded in the idea of a just and sustainable economy are - and consequently, how the transformations we're calling for demand not only a shift of the material, but also a shift in consciousness. This is as important—and fraught—a process as any... If I am to help build a global people's movement coherent, powerful, and peaceful enough to navigate this bottleneck, I must bear in mind the conflict occurring in many people's hearts and minds as they struggle into their courage, struggle to adapt to cosmology-shattering information, to realize that the old ways—which they endorsed and defended—have wrought incredible harm to themselves and others. We must chart a course for civilization-wide recovery and rehabilitation, and not because it's the merciful thing to do, but because our survival depends on it. I think we need to be marking routes to redemption, so to speak.

Marcie Smith, Responsible Endowments Coalition

Community is a cultural value, not a political value.

Sarah Baird, Center for a New American Dream

2 Areas of Alignment

This project identified nine areas of alignment shared by many of the leaders we interviewed:

1. There are many alternatives
2. The need for accessible new narratives
3. Making the economy work for all
4. Unifying economy and ecology
5. Building movement capacity and exploring new models of philanthropy
6. The need for large-scale investment
7. Building relationships to support cooperation, collaboration, and emergence
8. The need for local power and “deep democracy”
9. Opposing the old economy

2.1 There Are Many Alternatives

The leaders who joined our “movement weaving” conversations consistently expressed a desire for urgent, systemic transformation of the existing economy. Their call was twofold:

1. **Alleviate the old economy’s catastrophic effects** on families, communities, government, and environment, which include: gross wealth inequities, poverty and public health crises, racial and gender inequality, labor exploitation, deterioration of quality of life and relationships, climate change, resource depletion, destruction of vital ecosystems, erosion of democracy, and more.
2. **Build an alternative economy** that respects ecological limits and values all people, their relationships, biodiversity, and the commons (air, water, culture, etc.).

Many of these leaders shared a future vision of community-oriented, re-localized economies based on mutual support and cooperation, appropriately rooted in local needs, culture, and resources, with greater resilience in the face of future ecological, economic, and social instability.

These leaders also pointed to a wide variety of specific, practical alternative economic models that re-invest in communities, distribute wealth more equitably, strengthen democracy, and lessen negative environmental impacts (or even better, regenerate ecosystems). As they noted, a diverse array of alternatives are currently being piloted—and replicated—in communities across the United States, including:

- Alternative indicators of “progress”
- Alternative business models (e.g., worker-owned cooperatives and Benefit (B) Corporations)
- Democratization of capital
- Divestment (from extractive industries) and community re-investment
- Leveraging the power of local “anchor institutions”
- Economic and climate justice initiatives
- Decentralized decision-making and new forms of governance
- Supporting leadership and increasing participation of traditionally marginalized communities

- Regenerative local food production and waste management
- Community-controlled renewable energy projects
- Local investing
- Alternative currencies & timebanking
- Changing policy and local/state regulations
- Participatory budgeting
- Economic asset mapping
- “Reclaiming the commons”
- Sharing and gift economies
- New-paradigm philanthropy

For me, one of the most important things in our collective, broader new economy [movement] is to not just point out what we don't want, but to paint a very specific picture of what we do want...

Joe Grafton, American Independent Business Alliance

An ‘anchor institution’ is a large non-profit institution, classically a university or hospital, that is bound by place—unlike a corporation which has a lot of resources, but is not bound to place or community. It's those resources and the long-term perspective on relationship to place that offers some long-term possibilities for building the new economy... [W]e're seeing that these anchor institutions, which control huge amounts of resources, are starting to get very intentional about how they're spending their money and using those resources...toward sustaining the community instead of continuing in an exploitative and unsustainable economy.

John Duda, Democracy Collaborative

2.2 The Need for Accessible New Narratives

Although the outlines of what the New Economy and Community Resilience entail are already emerging, conventional wisdom still seems to assume that “there is no alternative” to the current system (aka “TINA”). Some movement leaders yearn for a new common narrative, one that will resonate with a significant segment of the American public. Many of this new narrative’s basic concepts have already been articulated: we are part of an interconnected, living planet; it’s possible to build a world that works for all; there’s an urgency of doing so before we cross tipping points; we can be happier and more fulfilled; the transition needs to be as inclusive and inviting as possible. Yet TINA, as well as traditional “capitalism versus socialism” framings, continues to dominate the general discourse. Many organizations are addressing this narrative creation task and might benefit from greater collaboration.

We need to tell a new story, find a new narrative, one that will resonate with a broader swath of the population.

Michael Toye, Canadian Community Economic Development Network

We've been developing a framework around the notion of economic democracy, trying to position a theory and framework that act as an alternative to capitalism as well as an alternative to centralized state socialism.

Aaron Tanaka, Boston Impact Initiative & Center for Economic Democracy

Something that attracted me to this work is the unifying nature of 'Main Street.' From conservative Alabama to liberal Massachusetts, it unites people, and there are few ideas like that to latch on to.

Joe Grafton, American Independent Business Alliance

[We] need a storyline tying the powerful work happening on the ground with the policy and governance piece that gets in the way of—or can facilitate the work of—families and communities building the life they want, and tying that to the paradigm-shifting work taking place in different realms.

Heather Tischbein, Thriving Resilient Communities Collaboratory (from May 13 group conversation)

2.3 Making the Economy Work for All

Participants shared a recognition that the existing economy is built on exploitation, and that the structures that will make up the new economy need to foster social justice and collective healing. The New Economy must “leave no one behind,” stated former NEC President Bob Massie in his plenary address at CommonBound in June 2014. And for this to happen, the organizations and initiatives that create those new economic structures must incorporate a deep understanding of the ways in which race, class, and privilege continue to play out in society at large and also within their own walls.

We're trying to bring a class and race lens into everything. One thing about class culture and working class organizations: people who are attracted to the ideas of Transition and resilience tend to be a college-educated constituency, which can be class-diverse, but there's a difference between being attracted to the concept as an idea vs. as a source of livelihood....We honor that people are coming in through different portals, and try not to be so abstract. We'll be more relevant as we do more stuff around livelihoods: moving money, moving consumer power to the local economy.

Chuck Collins, Jamaica Plain New Economy Transition

The work that's happening like Transition Towns is incredible. I love and am so inspired by anything that has to do with building community and local resilience. That's the shining light—building community—which makes me feel really good about society because these folks are working on rebuilding community, much of which was lost in the last 50 years or so. Hopefully there will be a point in time where Transition Towns in the U.S. will be relevant to lower income communities and communities of color.

Funder Advocate

...[One of the things that I see] alive in the work right now with young people is...a quite sophisticated desire for an analysis of our political economy that can explain both why a system in which labor is subordinated to capital leaves all of us all traumatized in one way or another - and also acknowledges, explains the function of, and calls us to confront from the differential impacts of identity within such an economy, particularly with respect to race, gender, sexuality, and documentation status. Some people are hurt a hell of a lot more in this economy and if our visions of a new one do not center that, this enterprise will have been for naught. Young people seem hungry to bring this analysis to bear both on the institutions they are working to transform, and also within their own movement-making communities. Real solidarity seems increasingly to be understood as something you must build with patience, care, and a grounded comprehension of the targeted violence this economy wages against particular groups of people, for example, people of color, women, and people in the Global South.

Marcie Smith, Responsible Endowments Coalition

2.4 Unifying Economy and Ecology

Where the old economy is extractive and premised on continuous, compounding growth, the New Economy is regenerative and recognizes that we must become good stewards of our one and only planet. Climate change is the signature issue bringing this into focus, although the old economy has of course created myriad environmental challenges from the most global to the most local levels.

Like social justice, ecological sustainability concerns are woven into the movement's DNA, suggesting that new economy enterprises and organizing strategies should be critically examined and respectfully highlighted when they fail to reflect these concerns. This is not to say the movement has aligned fully around a vision for an economy that is truly compatible with ecological limits and social justice (see the "Tensions" section below)—let alone other core sustainability issues like energy use. But the basic principles are largely accepted as foundational.

We work at the intersection of justice and ecology. We often start any conversation by rooting ourselves in appreciation that ecology literally means “knowledge of home,” and part of our political task is to ground ourselves in a true understanding of home: the watersheds and foodsheds that exist around us and truly feed us, that we need to re-prioritize and re-connect to. In that context “Economy” is literally management of home. “Eco” comes from “oikos” which means home in Greek. So ecology is “logic of home/home knowledge” and economy is “management of home.”

Mateo Nube, Movement Generation

2.5 Building Movement Capacity and Exploring New Models of Philanthropy

Limited financial resources pose a major challenge in growing the movement: many participants face significant funding constraints in their respective organizations, and some struggle with “brain drain” as their organizations are unable to adequately compensate talented, hard-working staff. Although many participants expressed a desire to increase collaboration and coordination with aligned organizations to share information and more efficiently allocate resources, they also noted the challenge of allocating the time and energy that collaboration requires, particularly when organizations and staff are already operating over capacity. Further, grant funding often focuses on specific project deliverables rather than capacity- or movement-building, and competition for limited funds between organizations with similar missions can disincentivize collaboration.

There is a great deal of interest in exploring new models for philanthropy that are more collaborative and democratic. As noted in a public consultation draft on this subject (“Philanthropy and the New Economy: Models for Collaborative and Democratic Innovation”) that was circulated at the NEC Annual Meeting:

[A] broad-based movement... demands a fundamental rethinking of NEC member funding approaches that are proving insufficient for the challenges ahead and for building a durable, high impact movement. Instead, a new vision of fundraising that embodies the same values that animate the New Economy—democracy, justice, and collaboration—should apply to giving and raising, as well as administering, funds.

We're doing really challenging work with limited resources, and there's a brain drain problem because some really talented people aren't willing or able to make the sacrifices necessary in order to continue to do this work... We're up against big money and some of the most sophisticated marketing the world has ever seen from corporations, which pushes people in the opposite direction; but we've still seen successes, and I can only imagine what would be possible if there was anywhere near the same level of resources going into our work.

Joe Grafton, American Independent Business Alliance

The movement [building] piece isn't something that we should be doing in our spare time—it's something we should be doing at least half the time. Funders should say “we're going to fund you to work together.” For a while I was doing this for free and could allocate my time as I wanted, but if you're trying to feed a family, particularly as a community organizer, which is pretty low-paid work, it's challenging. Collaboration is really hard, but that's what we need to be spending a lot of our time doing. For funders, this needs to be a top priority, and they need to have a deep understanding of the impact of this work.

Mira Luna, Shareable

...[W]ithin the new economy and more broadly in the environmental movement, philanthropy is calling the shots, and there's an unhealthy power relationship between the NGO community and philanthropy. The only way to fix that is to change the way philanthropy operates and the mechanism by which money is raised and sought and received, and who participates in all that.

Jon Scott, Singing Field Foundation & Clean Water Action

In five years I would love to see NEC being a leader in different models of philanthropy and being an advocate for redistributive practices of philanthropy as a necessary part of building a new economy.

Jackson Koepell, Soulardarity & Grand Aspirations

2.6 The Need for Significant Investment

Participants noted that in addition to the immediate need for funding to bolster movement capacity, significant new flows of capital will be needed to build out these efforts to a point where the New Economy begins to challenge the old one. This capital would need to come from a variety of sources, including, for example, the investment community—especially if major institutional investors, such as endowments and pension funds, decide to divest from fossil fuels and then re-invest in the new economy.

We don't need to identify and move trillions to identify and create a new [economic] center of gravity, just billions into new regenerative forms of production and creation. We can create many more jobs and many more opportunities for healthy livelihoods than the old dominant economy. One of the primary indicators of success will be identifying the pathways that enable capital to start moving into these new forms of infrastructure and production.

Mateo Nube, Movement Generation

...[T]his movement, other than the people who are doing it and are just regular people, is being driven by philanthropy. In most cases, organized philanthropy—meaning foundations—is 5% grants and 95% invested in the status quo in terms of economic systems. So, one of the things I'm most interested in is how to deploy that 95% of my foundation's assets in a way that is prudent and consistent with the mission and values of our family and will support the grant-making that we want to do... So we've divested from fossil fuel companies and are diligently working to invest in things that are on the solution side of the ledger.

Jon Scott, Singing Field Foundation & Clean Water Action

2.7 Building Relationships to Support Cooperation, Collaboration and Emergence

Many participants noted the value of building relationships and trust among individuals and organizations within the movement, which will allow collaboration to emerge organically and authentically. This is foundational for vibrant neighborhoods and strong local economies, and for the movement as a whole. Given the multi-faceted nature of the movement, and the large number of initiatives that are coming together in its name, there is a concern about how effective any “top-down” organizing can be. At the same time, if the opportunities for connecting across organizations and silos are sufficient, there is a sense that it is possible for integrated and coordinated action to develop without centralized decisionmaking. Several interviewees specifically appreciated the role of the New Economy Coalition and CommonBound Conference as a container for fostering connection and collaboration.

NEC... has become a really powerful resource for small grassroots projects to be engaged with the kind of national strategy and backing by strategic thought on a broader level that's both giving funding and intellectual resources, bringing the national perspective of thought to grassroots groups and making sure the thoughts and ideas of grassroots group are expressed in national strategy... If NEC is really successful, it's supporting a tremendous amount of work and strategy, and not necessarily defining that strategy.

Jackson Koepell, Grand Aspirations & Soulardarity

Meg Wheatley and Deborah Frieze [have done] work around the whole process of emergence, and how networks occur, and what you can do to support the emergence of social phenomenon that you really want to see succeed: Name, Connect, Nourish, and Illuminate... Name it when it's occurring. Name where the leadership is occurring. Connect those people, and those movements to each other, so that they begin to self-organize into a network or new networks. Figure out what any of these networks need, in terms of nourishment—often it's just the process of connection, sometimes there are other things needed—and provide those. And then illuminate it all by telling the stories, because that's what really accelerates the whole process.

Sandy Wiggins, BALLE & RSF Social Finance

Everyone talks about how the “siloeing” really hurts us. It's so common to be in a session or a plenary with a Q&A and we're talking with a brilliant set of panelists, and someone says “well, what can we do about this?” and the response is “we need to engage labor, we need to engage the workers' rights movement, we need to look at sustainable development and economic models, etc.” and everyone nods their head but then the conversation ends because no one in that room is working on those other issues.

This is where we feel that there's truly a useful space: for funders to work at intersections that move beyond the limitation of one issue area represented in most affinity groups. We're looking at alternatives in regard to how we are structured so that funders that want to work at those intersections are welcome, allowing them to plug in.

Funder Advocate

As the [Shareable] network grows, the staff will step back and allow people to connect with each other. Otherwise it's just a nonprofit telling people what to do. A network helps people to share their dreams with each other, support each other. Initially we [may] have to broker relationships, but more and more those connections are being made, or after we brokered them they take off on their own. It's a lot more authentic. The old organizing model is: “I go in with an agenda.” [The new model] is empowerment, allow people to create their own destiny. It happens when a community is connected to itself, but also to other communities doing similar work.

Mira Luna, Shareable

A favorite piece of graffiti from Montreal someone spray-painted is, “What we need is a new Messiah.” Someone to solve our problems for us. But a strategy that is probably more desirable and more likely to succeed is to establish some common ground as a movement—we all have different audiences, different voices, who we need to speak to and grow our respective audiences. The truth is there will be many stories, leaders, voices. Multiplicity is an advantage.

Michael Toye, Canadian Community Economic Development Network

2.8 The Need for Local Power and Deep Democracy

The old economy concentrates power in the hands of the few: large corporations dominate the economic and political systems, management commands and controls workers, while state and national policies and laws often override the ability of communities to determine their own fate and undermine the capacity to think and act at the bioregional level. Indeed, the very notion that there is “an economy”—as opposed to a vast multiplicity of economic realms and activities—signifies the degree to which our economic thinking has become centralized.

Many leaders in the CRNE movement emphasize the importance of building grassroots capacity and shifting power and decision-making to the local level, consistent with a core set of principles such as

social justice and environmental sustainability. This is reflected, for example, in support for worker cooperatives, building local economies, participatory budgeting, developing political strategies at the grassroots level, and confronting the political power of major corporations.

Both in descriptions of how their efforts have played out and in their visions for the future, leaders in the movement consistently emphasized the importance of strong ties to community, and deep relationships within communities. The “old-fashioned” values of trust, reciprocity, mutual support, and working for the common good animate their stories, and they point to these factors as critical to creating sustainable local and regional economic systems.

There's not one economy—that's a cultural construct that's been forced upon us. Really what we need is many economies.

Mateo Nube, Movement Generation

In Greensboro, NC we're launching a community grocery store in a longstanding food desert in an urban community...and last week, I was meeting with a County Commissioner. They're trying to figure out how to move county money to help open the grocery store, and to have an ongoing piece of the public health budget directed at food deserts. The reason they are taking this seriously is because of all the people power generated through two years of work. It's not uncommon for 150 people to show up at a City Council meeting...

Marnie Thompson, Fund for Democratic Communities (from May 13 group conversation)

2.9 Opposing the Old Economy

In one sense, the CRNE movement is a classic example of Buckminster Fuller’s famous dictum: “You never change things by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete.” But it is also widely acknowledged by movement leaders that the old economy probably isn’t going down without a fight. Indeed, the forces of “business as usual” have already begun challenging some CRNE initiatives, and we can expect increasing resistance from stakeholders in the dominant economy as the New Economy grows to the point where it is recognized in the mainstream as a real threat.

What's very, very alive and has us all very excited and commands a lot of our programmatic and conceptual attention is precisely the creation of a visionary and oppositional economy that can serve as the new way forth, given this tremendous moment of transition we're in... When I use the phrase "oppositional economy" I don't mean just naming something we're against, but by oppositional we mean creating a set of economies that are contesting actively for access to capital, labor, water, and land so that it can create a new center of gravity... [W]e're very invested in many aspects of that work, from the nuts and bolts of what it looks like to really give expression to the "invest" side of the divestment campaign as it relates to fossil fuels specifically. And conceptually we're very engaged and committed to deep political education in many sectors of civil society that relate to creating a common sense of vision and strategic alignment around this visionary and oppositional economy...

[A]s we start talking about what the new or oppositional economy looks like, it's really important to ground in the pillars of what the new economy are, to then appreciate what it is that we're building and moving towards. We're currently in the "banks and tanks" economy—rooted in "bosses, bulldozers, and buying."

Mateo Nube, Movement Generation

[In five years] if we are wildly successful we will have triggered some virulent resistance. If we're successful in really building out these alternative models we'll be challenging the governance structures which surround them and trigger larger and more serious fights that get at the core of what makes this economic structure tick. I'm not sure exactly what those fights look like, but if we're successful we're going to be generating conflict in places and that conflict will be necessary to have the whole system transition. At the table [at CommonBound] we were talking about the very real possibility that in 5-10 years there are cities in the US that are under martial law because the new economy work happening will be ungovernable by the current system—and it came up that Detroit is one of the places where that could happen.

Jackson Koepell, Grand Aspirations & Soulardarity

3 Tensions

Although there is broad alignment in many respects within the CRNE movement and its various components, there are also areas of tension, inviting deeper inquiry and consideration of difficult questions, such as:

1. Addressing inequality and limits to growth
2. Capitalism and the New Economy
3. Getting from here to there: urgency, strategy, and emergence

3.1 Addressing Inequality and Limits to Growth

While interviewees generally recognized the importance of human and environmental well-being, only a few mentioned explicitly that their respective organizations are deeply committed to both social justice and ecological balance as central pillars of the New Economy.

We know that, in aggregate, current human economic activity consumes natural resources and produces huge amounts of waste faster than the planet's ecosystems can regenerate. A sustainable economy—one that can support existing and future levels of human life—must operate within nature's bounds. This will require reduced levels of resource consumption, and is not compatible with an economy that requires infinite growth. Moreover, as several leaders in the movement point out explicitly, the extractive and exploitative economy has left millions of people within the United States and billions around the world in poverty, unable to meet basic needs, while concentrating wealth in the hands of a relative few.

Realizing the vision of an economy that works for all and respects nature's limits will require commitment to both. In practice, meeting the basic needs of over seven billion people without growing the old economy further implies a need to reallocate how natural resources—and, ultimately, economic and political power—are distributed.

Increasing alignment around the practical implications of committing to both social justice and ecological balance—and having both issues inform organizations' work—is fertile ground for deeper exploration within the CRNE movement.

In terms of the national discourse, we understand that there's an issue of climate change and an issue of inequality...to address inequality sometimes it's said that we just need to "grow the pie," but that conflicts with the need for ecological sustainability... We need to raise the bottom to meet basic human needs, but also bring down the top (by restructuring the money system, worker ownership, and new forms of ownership).

Noel Ortega, Institute for Policy Studies

...[F]or years and years we've talked about the three Es: economy, environment, and equity. It's easy to talk about environment, easy to talk about economy, but when it comes to social equity, it's kind of a third rail. In my fifteen years at the Leadership Institute, I've come to believe that equity might be the most critical. We can't just focus on economy and environment and expect the equity piece to take care of itself.

Rick Theis, Leadership Institute for Ecology and the Economy

3.2 Capitalism and the New Economy

Within the broad coalition that makes up the movement, there is a wide spectrum of thinking on capitalism. Some CRNE leaders still see it as the only system that can organize a complex economy with billions of participants. They readily acknowledge that major reforms in capitalism are needed to level the playing field for small businesses and communities, but they are not calling for its demise, and they are concerned that doing so might marginalize the movement. Embracing capitalism, as they see it, offers the opportunity to ally with powerful mainstream forces and organizations, such as local chambers of commerce and government, and perhaps corporations as well.

Other CRNE leaders spoke of the need for a new paradigm that is neither capitalist nor socialist, but is based on cooperation and democracy at all levels. They argue that the profit motive is inherently limiting, as so much of what people value has no meaningful price. The old economy's needs for profit, growth, and high returns on private investment are all incompatible with a finite planet. They also suggest that an economy that leaves no one behind is impossible within a capitalist system because competition and selfishness are favored over cooperation and interdependence.

For us, the question is how do we talk about alternatives to capitalism in a way that doesn't immediately alienate people—including funders, which I think is part of the reason why some organizations are afraid to offer a broader analysis—but also how to talk about alternatives to capitalism in a coherent way... It seems like our generation of young adults see it more as common sense that capitalism is responsible for massive wealth disparities and concentration of wealth, and if not transformed it is going to lead the human species to potential ecological disaster.

Aaron Tanaka, Boston Impact Initiative & Center for Economic Democracy

3.3 Getting from Here to There: Urgency, Strategy, and Emergence

Transitioning to a New Economy is an incredibly complex and challenging task, which could reasonably take many decades to achieve. At the same time, we face an immediate need for change of course.

An important consideration for the CRNE movement is how to balance the desire for urgent, high-impact action, and at the same time respect the characteristics inherent to building truly resilient communities and sustainable new economies:

- a highly diverse set of organizations and initiatives,
- the need for many “new economies” to reflect local and bioregional contexts, and
- the value of deep democracy that supports spreading decision-making power among all stakeholders.

The intersection of urgency and differing theories of change among movement leaders has generated a spectrum of thinking around *strategy*, including the following:

- Expert/leader-driven strategic planning to create rapid change,
- Longer-term strategic planning and alliances to coordinate and support grassroots action,
- Emergence via new narratives, processes to increase communications, connections, and collaboration, and models for philanthropy and investment that decentralize decision-making and flows of funds.

These approaches are not mutually exclusive—nor do they fully capture the breadth and diversity of thought within the movement—but they do contribute to the dynamics of conversations around urgency and strategy.

What was exciting about the five years following the NEC conference is that there was a real concrete effort made to articulate a vision, a sense of a shared horizon about where we wanted to go and how all these different pieces of the new economy fit together.... Having effective networks to actually communicate that proved to be really essential in helping these developments accelerate each other.

John Duda, Democracy Collaborative (envisioning the movement five years from now)

[O]ver the next five years..., that level of coordinated muscle was applied in these very strategic arenas [and] in several areas across the country people took bold, audacious steps toward the implementation of these new forms of visionary and opposition economy. [And] the larger body acted in coordination to support it and made [those] bold moves succeed.

Mateo Nube, Movement Generation (envisioning the movement five years from now)

None of this can be forced. It's happening on its own. It's emergent activity. It's part of that evolutionary trajectory. But what we can do to support it is to be constantly scanning for it.

Sandy Wiggins, BALLE & RSF Social Finance

What is the best, most effective, most elegant way of collaborating and working together for greatest gain, and what could those systems look like? What's that architecture and communications structure that's as simple as possible but gives enough bones to the structure so it is coherent and strong? What do the groups on the ground want?

Carolyn Stayton, Transition US

4 Visions of the Future

We asked participants to look back from a future five years from now in which the CRNE movement has succeeded “wildly”:

The community owns its own energy, owns common land together, has common telecommunications services. The commons has grown—it had been shrinking—and this network of [sharing] cities has really blossomed and is taking ownership of its own destiny. The models that are emerging are being spread through the network, virally and organically, replicating in a way that reflects each community's culture and goals. And when I say sharing I mean anything from public banking and alternative currencies, housing and food cooperatives, Makerspaces and art collectives.

Mira Luna, Shareable

Today, as for the last several years, the US Census Bureau has finished its third random survey of the happiness of all of America, because this is the indicator used by federal policymakers to guide our future. States and localities are following suit.

Laura Musikanski, The Happiness Alliance

Across place, these new forms of economy are rooted in diverse forms of leadership. For example, immigrant communities of the South of the US have literally been at the heel of the boot of the dominant economy, but are now located at the center of these new forms of democratic governance. There is a truly multi-racial expression, a cross-class expression of leadership and creation and vision and application being manifested everywhere that gives life to what deep democracy means from the workplace up to the statehouse.

Mateo Nube, Movement Generation

There are now hundreds of ‘Local Economy’ or ‘Livability Centers’ across the United States. They're in small rural towns, suburbs and neighborhoods in big cities—Chicago has five of them! They are physical centers and the go-to place for education, action and starting new local businesses. The Centers are the focal point for the sustainability movement in each location. And they ROCK! They are totally supported by a diverse array of income streams.

Kelley Rajala, Livability Project

The NEC gathered a lot of groups and built it to a scale that involved almost everyone. The most exciting thing was a system/mechanism to share information rapidly throughout the network. The more that happened the more real it became. People built stronger relationships and connected, building the foundation for a stronger movement. People were very dynamic, able to respond quickly to different issues but at the same time very focused. As things progressively got worse, the NEC was there as a solution. When the country was ready, NEC had already built the system to transition to, and we [did] that without society collapsing.

Noel Ortega, Institute for Policy Studies

The collapse of the old economic paradigm happened a lot faster than we thought it would, in part because the divestment movement on campuses across the country really accelerated, and universities were looking to move millions and millions of dollars into different kinds of investments, which helped catalyze the idea that there was a scalable future in some of these kinds of investments. Seeing this take off over the last five years, cities understanding this is a much better way of doing economic development than just handing money to corporations. Anyone looking at economic policy could have seen that the old approach—lobbing suitcases of money at big corporations and hoping they created a few jobs—was ridiculous and a massive race to the bottom.

John Duda, Democracy Collaborative

We're living in a world where localism is thriving and communities are thriving and resilient. They're drawing their critical resources from the locality or region: food, energy, water, fiber, in particular. People have *en masse* recognized that not only is this a more sustainable way to live, it's a happier way to live. By engaging in local commerce and local economic activity, they're building relationships and building community, and those are the things that are most satisfying to human beings.

The global economy has shifted dramatically. Large, publicly traded corporations have transformed into whole new kinds of institutions with different ownership structures. Any industry that operates at a global level—because we're never going to produce jet engines or computers in every community in the world—are doing it in a way that capitalizes on the ability to draw from these local economies, and they have ownership structures that create deep accountability for everything that they do, not just in terms for the natural environment, but in terms of their employees and the people they impact through their value chain, as well as their customers.

Sandy Wiggins, BALLE & RSF Social Finance

Five years from now I really see myself still living in or near Highland Park. I think we've certainly succeeded in setting up 200 solar streetlights that are owned by an awesome cooperative that has massive voluntary participation from around the city—thousands of people engaged with it. That cooperative is connecting folks who normally wouldn't have access to resources for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects for their homes.

The cooperative is also doing community-centered sustainable development projects in the city—gardens and huge take-back of the 50% of land that is owned by the city—by current residents, we're seeing a lot of local food and a new storm water management structure. I'm also seeing that this cooperative that owns and manages the streetlights is also becoming an increasingly powerful voice in affecting the development plans for the city and creating really strong community benefits agreements and other mechanisms for ensuring the community benefits as the city develops in a sustainable way.

Jackson Koepell, Grand Aspirations & Soulardarity

Because of what I've done deliberately, together with others, both in philanthropy and in the nonprofit community, the nonprofit community is healthier and has more resources, and is on closer-to-equal footing with the philanthropic community that supports them. Narrowly, we're talking about just environmental groups, but a fairly broad definition of what that means.

This has happened because of the investments my foundation and others have made in community enterprises, and in alternatives to coal and [other] fossil fuels, and in companies with a social benefit mission. And also, innovating in philanthropy so there are more ways for people to participate, both on the giving and receiving side... So there's a more vibrant environmental nonprofit community with more members and more donors of all types, and more resource-generating mechanisms.

Jon Scott, Singing Field Foundation & Clean Water Action

There's economic power at the local level and more cooperation than competition. It's a mature ecosystem, symbiotic, and different organizations have their niches. In 2019 we see businesses are more locally owned. Most assets are held collectively since we've identified that that is the most advantageous way to live. There's a lot more inter-connectedness and connectedness in our locales. Community wealth is measured not by GDP but in the health of relationships of mutual support and cooperation, on the well-being of community.

Carolyn Stayton, Transition US

There's been a rebirth in entrepreneurship. The world is talking about the great economic revitalization of the United States. We see businesses being formed in a variety of structures—privately & cooperatively owned, B corps & community owned businesses. Through that there has been an incredible boom in job creation. Unemployment is at record lows, and it's due to GOOD jobs with a living wage and advancement opportunity being provided. We've seen a fundamental paradigm shift in the world of finance. Less than 1% of people in the country previously invested locally, now more than half of people with individual investment portfolios are investing in local businesses.

We're seeing a fundamental culture shift. People have rejected the idea of consumerism, and have made the desire for things the antithesis of cool. It's even making its way into the suburbs, with people thinking differently in the most "strip-malled" places in the country. Quality matters more than getting the cheapest item possible. Where their dollar goes is an exercise in where their power goes, so people are making more informed decisions about the long term consequences of their purchases... It's a rebirth of American culture and one that focuses on collectivism and bringing people together as opposed to looking for our differences.

Joe Grafton, American Independent Business Alliance

5 Conclusion

Symbolic of the healthier, more responsive, and more resilient communities and economies we seek to create, the Community Resilience & New Economy (CRNE) movement takes the shape of a dynamic ecosystem within which different organizations working on community-building, economic activity, advocacy, and funding serve unique but interdependent roles. These diverse stakeholders find common ground in the understanding that the old economy must be fundamentally transformed and rebuilt on values of social justice, ecological sustainability, resilient and thriving communities, fulfilling lives and relationships, and more.

The recognition of this common ground has produced new energy and synergy in the CRNE movement, and given many of its members greater clarity about the kind of new narrative needed to make the mainstream case for systemic transformation. Through authentic collaboration, relationships built on trust, and opportunities to connect and learn from each other, individuals and organizations within the CRNE movement are increasingly aligning around shared values and visions. The potential of this vibrant movement—refreshing in its holistic approach and willingness to take on arguably the most complex, harmful, and deeply entrenched challenges of our time—was a powerful theme that wove through many of our interviews, and it filled the air at the CommonBound conference.

It took global capitalism some 400 years and a treasure trove of resources to arrive at today's world-dominating form. In contrast, the New Economy and Community Resilience movements—though they acknowledge an intellectual, moral, and inspirational debt owed to the many movements that preceded them—have been emerging for only a few decades. Powerful, paradigm-shifting work is already happening within and among communities and organizations, yet an immense amount of capacity-building and resources are needed to realize the goals of the CRNE movement.

Then again, as several of the leaders noted, even something as seemingly entrenched as global capitalism might unwind at any moment, due to an unexpected event or the crossing of some unseen tipping point. Thus even an emergent process of change has the potential to take hold very rapidly. Meanwhile, efforts to build a new economy and thriving, resilient communities will require patience, rejecting the prevailing economic ideals of speed, efficiency, and “scaling-up” at the expense of the movement's core values.

There is an important role for further conversation around the core values of the CRNE movement, including the relative importance of social justice, ecological balance, and empowered communities as central pillars, and the level of shared commitment to those values.

There is an even more important role for creating “facts on the ground”: dynamic, adaptive, and inclusive examples that attract participation far beyond “the choir.” These might be developed through strategic planning and organized action, or they might emerge as the diverse players within the movement connect, cross-pollinate, and self-organize. In either case, more resources—especially funding—will be needed for the movement to infiltrate the mainstream. As many movement leaders remarked, demonstrating to people that a far better future is indeed possible is the most compelling way to make the case for change.

And, as these leaders explained—both directly and through the stories they shared—Community Resilience and New Economy efforts almost invariably reinforce each other. For example, the success of New Economy efforts often depend on the relationships that undergird resilient communities. Likewise, communities are strengthened by new economic models that invest in people and place.

We are inspired by the stories and possibilities raised by the leaders we met through this project, and look forward to supporting and reporting on these and thousands of other efforts at Post Carbon Institute's resilience.org website (where full transcripts of the interviews from this project are posted). We hope the voices, visions, and reflections shared in this report will contribute to the richness of building a thoughtful and effective movement for thriving, resilient communities and economies that work for all.

6 Additional Resources

- “Weaving the Movement” Project Hackpad, with interview transcripts and notes from virtual group conversations:
<https://hackpad.com/Home-Pad-for-the-Weaving-the-New-Economy-Movement-Conversations-1LumrvlAzrS>
- New Economy Coalition website:
<http://neweconomy.net/new-economy-coalition>
- CommonBound Conference website
<http://commonbound.org/>
- Post Carbon Institute’s Resilience.org website
<http://resilience.org>
- Guide to Building Thriving, Resilient Communities
<http://www.resilience.org/communities-guide>
- Thriving Resilient Communities Collaboratory (TRCC) website
<http://www.thrivingresilience.org/>

Read the interviews with “Weaving the Movement” participants on [Resilience.org](http://www.resilience.org):

- Noel Ortega, Institute for Policy Studies, New Economy Working Group
<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2014-09-04/pillars-of-the-new-economy>
- Michael Toye, Canadian Community Economic Development Network
<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2014-09-04/we-don-t-need-a-new-messiah>
- Mira Luna, Shareable
<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2014-07-17/working-for-a-shareable-future>
- Joe Grafton, American Independent Business Alliance
<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2014-09-04/divesting-with-every-purchase-independent-business-in-the-new-economy>
- Chuck Collins, Jamaica Plain New Economy Transition
<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2014-09-04/living-the-new-economy-in-jamaica-plain>
- Kelley Rajala, Share Exchange, North Bay Made, & The Livability Project
<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2014-09-04/kickstarting-local-economies>
- Sarah Baird, Center for a New American Dream
<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2014-09-04/more-fun-less-stuff>
- Carolyne Stayton, Transition US
<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2014-09-04/to-build-a-movement-build-community>
- Mateo Nube, Movement Generation
<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2014-06-27/introducing-the-oppositional-economy>
- Laura Musikanski, The Happiness Alliance
<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2014-09-04/measuring-what-we-value>
- John Duda, The Democracy Collaborative
<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2014-09-04/leveraging-the-power-of-anchor-institutions>
- Rich Theis, The Leadership Institute for Ecology and the Economy
<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2014-09-04/seeing-change-happen>

- Marcie Smith, Responsible Endowments Coalition
- Jon Scott, Singing Field Foundation & Clean Water Action
<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2014-09-04/putting-your-money-where-your-heart-is>
- Jackson Koepell, Soulardarity & Grand Aspirations
<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2014-09-04/power-from-the-people-and-the-healing-power-of-community-controlled-renewables>
- Aaron Tanaka, Boston Impact Initiative & Center for Economic Democracy
<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2014-09-04/building-economic-democracy-radical-inclusivity>
- Sandy Wiggins, Business Alliance for Local Living Economies (BALLE) & RSF Social Finance
<http://www.resilience.org/stories/2014-09-04/a-new-economy-is-emerging>